Inside Looking Out

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by Zigzagwanderer

Summary

Continuing Will and Hannibal's post-Fall life on their little Baltic island. This is just after 'Dreams are like Water'.

Notes

So, Will and Hannibal healed after TWOTL, and after some soul-searching, are trying to live on Vakkrehejm, an island in an archipelago in the Baltic Sea. I will try to re-post all of the fics that led up to this series asap so that these make some kind of sense.

It was always going to be perilous; that first step back into the world. But every breath is fumed with gunpowder, every word or action has its hidden, honed edge, when you get right down to it.

And Saltvikar is hardly Baltimore, after all.

A market, a modest exhibition, an outdoor performance by some amateur jazz trio. Hannibal stops himself from wrinkling his nose at the last part, just in time.

Will squints north towards the next day's weather front, shakes his short, frayed curls, and stomps off to finish creosoting the boathouse. After that, there is supper to catch. And after that, there is bed.

Later, Will is perched on the edge of the tub, badgering Hannibal to rinse his hair already and come back to the sheets they have just left, trembling again in hunger and anticipation as he watches the water run over fresh bite marks on shoulder blade and spine, when he realises.

There may be greater jeopardies in life than sailing across the archipelago to visit their principle island.

The satisfying slavery of near self-sufficiency.

The fascination of the flows, the endless blues that carry the mind away and run with it, abstract yet purposeful, between the skerries.

And always, always, now, the slow, pushing drug of Hannibal above him, teeth and talons and scars lit by the silver fires of arctic storms; pulses of charge branching down so terribly to antler Hannibal's face, making sweet mercury of his sweat on Will's tongue.

It is dangerous indeed, to have a life that you love.
That you would kill to keep.

But if they ever have to run, he will need to remember how not to trip over his own shoelaces.

So, Will is standing, blinking, sipping complimentary rum punch in a corner of the makeshift gallery, gripping to himself a dozen string bags of apparently essential produce. He himself has bought some woollen socks and a plastic sack full of venison scraps.

"It would look well in the dining room. Between the two main windows?"
Outside the marquee, the tourists claver, the food stalls rustle, the buskers strum through the crowds like enterprising sharks. Will has not been in proximity to this many people in a very long while.

Hannibal sees him swallow twice, hard, and calls his name, his real name, very quietly, in a certain tone. It is an invisible, imperative embrace. Will calms right down, stops scanning his fellow visitors for people who want to arrest or assassinate them, and forces himself to consider the purchase of art. The piece is narrow enough to fit, and Hannibal is an admirer of

the local surrealist, but Will can, as in all things, say no. Often there is a good deal of pleasure to be had in being persuaded.

But before he can quell his unease long enough to phrase something provocative, there is a cackle at his elbow.

“Thom, how surprising to see you at our spring fair. And tidy, for a change. Eirik untied you from the bedposts long enough to visit civilisation, heh?”
“Morning, Ernesta.” Thom rolls his eyes. “How’s the heat exchanger holding up?”
“Good enough for trolling and deliveries, clever monkey. Thanks to you the motor won’t need replacing for another season. Remind me to knock something off your account next time you slouch into the chandlery, stinking of wet dog.”

Hannibal approaches, and bows decorously over one rough, wind-tanned claw.
The elderly woman sighs out tobacco and fish. “Aah, I look at you, Eirik, and I remember seeing Erik Bruhn dance in Strasbourg, so many years ago now. Such charm he had, such grace. Such buttocks.”
“Then I do not fear offending you; our imminent departure will afford you more joy than my remaining.” Hannibal has the picture, wrapped in paper, under one arm, prepared to make reparation to Will when they get back to Vakkrehejm for such high-handedness. They have some trays of seedlings to collect on their way back to the harbour. Conn and Sandy will be wondering where they are.

Will is pale with effort, but smiles one of Thom’s cute smiles.
“See, babe? Told you those trousers were easy on the eye.”
He links fingers with an amused Hannibal, very briefly, very lightly, but Ernesta, when she chooses, has the vision of an osprey. She seizes their hands.
“Ho oh, so this is what was in that parcel from that fancy Swiss jeweller, Eirik? A matching pair, very nice. A little plain, but your man has a certain taste, Thom.”

Will cannot help but blush. Stupidly and honestly, amid all the deceptions and anxiety.
“Yeah,” he says softly. “Yeah.”

They dawdle back towards the water. The edges of the islands are, as yet, still unwarmed and ugly; away from the bunting and bustle of townships such as this, the coastline is itself, osteodermic, armoured against the bumping of bergs and winter-torn lumber, unsoftened by the blooms and buds that will come.

Hannibal’s sweater is a warm anchor beneath Will’s fingers. Green as the whitebeam trees Will is trying to coax along in the woods to the east of their little white house.

“I saw the dog toys you bought, by the way. Shoulda hidden them better.”
“I was not aware it was you I was attempting to astonish.”
“Conn will chew his to bits within a week.”
Hannibal turns and pushes at Will’s mouth with his. It is so sudden a kiss that Will wonders if he just tasted a memory.
“Then I will buy the brute another," he promises. "And another.”

They move down the boardwalk.
The police launch is docked next to their vessel, Inspector Linna waiting by the lines.
Will feels the serpent shift and slide once more beneath his skin.

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